

SCOTTISH HOME DEPARTMENT

Memorandum on Children's Homes

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Memorandum on Children's Homes

Introduction

In 1950 the Homes Committee of the Scottish Advisory Council on Child Care issued their report* on the conduct of children's homes provided by local authorities and voluntary organisations. That report contained a number of general principles and recommendations to be followed in the care of children in these homes. Since then many advances have been made in this field of social work, as those in charge of homes have experimented and have developed new methods. Since then, too, some problems of special significance or difficulty have emerged, and different practical solutions have been tried. These developments since 1950 have been studied, with the help of the Advisory Council ; and this Memorandum, which should be read as a supplement to the Report of the Council's Homes Committee, summarises the conclusions that have been reached. Much that it contains will not be novel to those who are actively concerned with the administration of the homes, but it is hoped that at the present juncture the Memorandum will serve as a useful compendium of advice.

I. Receiving children into care, and their assessment

(a) RECEPTION CENTRES

1. Local authorities were called on in the Children Act, 1948, to provide " separate accommodation for the temporary reception of children with, in particular, the necessary facilities for observation of their physical and mental condition." This accommodation could be provided in premises set apart for reception or in a separate unit within an all-purpose home ; the local authority could provide their own accommodation or do so in association with another local authority.

Receiving the children

2. Where the removal of the child from his home is not a matter of immediate urgency it may be possible for the children's officer first to

* Published by H. M. Stationery Office. Price 9d.

make some preliminary observations of the child in his own home surroundings.

3. The child should be escorted from home by a member of the Children's Department, where possible by one with whom he already has some acquaintance, who will be able to comfort him if he is under strain. It is important that on arrival he should receive a friendly welcome from the warden, who should have some knowledge of the child's history. If he has friends in the Centre, he should meet them at once. His first impression of the Centre should be of a bright homely place.

4. The child may have been encouraged to bring with him some prized personal possessions to which he is attached, and these should be treated with respect. If possible his clothing should be made clean and wearable and deficiencies should be made up. On leaving the Centre he should take with him the clothes to which he has become accustomed.

5. Despite the best endeavours of the staff of the Centre the newly admitted child may not respond for a time. This may be accounted for by his distress on leaving home or by earlier periods of neglect and unhappiness. Many of the children will present quite an unnatural picture of themselves during their first few weeks in the Centre, and they can be helped mainly by a period of quiet living in the care of staff who are seeking to comfort and befriend them.

Medical examination

6. The child, who may have to be placed at first in isolation quarters, should be medically examined soon after admission. Further medical examination (for example a chest X-ray) should be arranged as necessary, and any necessary medical, optical or dental treatment should be provided. The results of these examinations and the treatments given should be recorded on a card which will accompany the child when he leaves the Centre. It is usual and desirable for the child to have a final medical check before he leaves the Centre.

Examination by educational psychologist

7. Where practicable, all the children in the Centre should be seen and reported on by the educational psychologist. His report will show whether there is a development in intelligence corresponding to age, and will give some indication of the likelihood of the child

being able to make progress in school and to cope with life generally. It may point to some emotional adjustment which may be necessary to enable him to achieve stability and to make the fullest use of his intellectual capacity.

Child's contact with own parents

8. Unless there are good reasons to the contrary, the staff of the Centre should seek the goodwill and co-operation of the child's own parents, impressing on them the powerful influence for good or ill which they inevitably bring to bear on their children. The parents or other close relatives should then be encouraged to visit the child in the Reception Centre, unless it is considered that they would exert an undesirable influence over him.

Records for assessment

9. With a view to assessment, reports on the child should be obtained from the Centre staff, doctor, psychologist, teacher, and any child guidance clinic staff who have had the child under observation. These should be collated with information furnished by the Children's Department and by the child's own relatives. It is particularly important that the children's officer should gather together all available information about the child's social background. The child himself during his stay at the Centre will probably supply a fund of information about the illnesses from which he has suffered, the schools which he has attended, and the people he has lived with.

Case conference

10. The final assessment to determine the most suitable placing for the child should be made as soon as the records are complete, but the placing should not be determined on paper reports alone. The child's case should be considered at a "case conference," attended by the children's officer, the officer in charge of the Reception Centre, the school psychologist, the doctor and any other person who has had the child under observation or has a useful contribution to make. In particular, the conference should be attended by the member of the staff of the Children's Department who received the child into care and the member who will be immediately responsible for carrying out the recommendations made, if the same officer does not do both.

Decision on the child's future

11. The first aim will be to find a foster home suited to the child's special needs as ascertained at the Centre. If for any reason it is not practicable to board-out the child it will be necessary to place him in a home where his needs will be met. It is essential that these placings should be made with deliberation and, as far as can be foreseen, on a long term basis. A series of changes may well prove disastrous to the child's progress. The transfer from the Centre should be made expeditiously once a decision is arrived at, for there is a danger of the child becoming attached to the staff and the children in the temporary Reception Centre and becoming disturbed when he is moved on.

(b) CHILDREN'S HOMES

Reception

12. Authorities who have no reception home either in separate premises or as a unit within an all-purpose home will have to look to long-stay children's homes to receive children. Many of the recommendations in Part (a) of this chapter will be found to be applicable to the reception of children direct into long-stay homes. In an all-purpose home it is important for the well-being of the more permanent children that their group should be disturbed as little as possible, and that their housemother should offer them a closer relationship than is possible with a reception group. Accordingly the reception of children should if possible be entrusted to one member of the staff personally suited to the work, and, where numbers justify it, the new arrivals should be formed into separate groups with their own accommodation.

Assessment

13. While giving full attention to the child's immediate requirements in the way of comfort, sympathy, food, clothing, and medical attention, the matron and the children's officer should keep in view the main objective, namely, that the child should eventually become truly known as an individual to, and be carefully assessed by, those who will thereafter be responsible for planning his future.

14. While the consultants and specialists mentioned in Part (a) of the chapter should be called in as necessary, the children's officer, boarding-out officer and the matron of the home are invariably responsible for ascertaining and recording the child's history and assessing his

needs. They should all take part in the case conference at which the children's officer has to decide, after consultation, whether the child is fit for boarding-out or must for a time be accommodated in a children's home. In readiness for such a conference reports may be prepared on the lines of the specimen forms appended to this Memorandum.

15. Where a local authority have not set up a children's home, and are not able to obtain the help of another local authority or a voluntary home, it is recommended that the co-operation of foster parents should be sought in the setting apart for reception of a good foster home, readily accessible to the office of the Children's Department, where the child newly received into care may be placed for a time for observation and assessment by the staff of the Children's Department. It is recognised that such foster parents should receive a special rate of remuneration.

II. Family Grouping

Home as substitute family home

16. The requirement in the 1948 Act that children in care of a local authority shall be boarded-out unless this is not practicable or desirable for the time being is based on the principle that the best environment for the upbringing of a normal child is a normal family, and that the best substitute for the natural family to which the child belongs is another family. But even where for one reason or another a child cannot be placed in a foster home, and must be placed in an institution, it is possible for that institution to reproduce many of the features of family life which are important for the developing child. The aim should therefore be so to organise institutions as to reduce to the minimum the difference between the institution and the family.

17. The organisation of homes with this in view appeared to offer such prospects of overcoming the defects of an institutional upbringing that a special committee of the Scottish Advisory Council on Child Care was set up to investigate both its possibilities and its difficulties. They recommended that during the transition period the following temporary measures might be taken :

- (a) dormitories should be divided by partitions to form small bedrooms containing not more than four beds with one sitting room for every three bedrooms ;
- (b) where it is not possible to arrange for meals (brought perhaps on trolleys from the central kitchen) to be taken in a dining

area with suitable serving and wash-up facilities, provided near the group sitting room, the groups should be kept together at their own tables in the dining room ;

- (c) a housemother should be attached permanently to each group of not more than 12 children, as the continuity of the substitute parent figure is of great importance. She should spend as much time as possible with them in the living quarters ; sleep in a room adjacent to the children's bedrooms ; and sit at table and eat with the children at meals ;
- (d) the children should be encouraged to keep in touch with their own real parents wherever possible ;
- (e) natural families should be kept together ;
- (f) it is important that there should be facilities for the older boys and girls to meet socially at frequent intervals ;
- (g) while no child should be retained in a home if there is an opportunity for him to be suitably boarded-out, the groups within the home should remain constant as far as possible. The transfer, except in special cases, of a child from one family group to another involving not only the change of family companionship but more important, a change of "mother," is bound to have an unsettling effect on the child and cause a feeling of insecurity which is detrimental to his full development ;
- (h) children in homes should be encouraged to mix as much as possible with the outside world and particularly they should go to school outside the grounds of the home where possible ;
- (i) wherever possible, each family group should be in charge of a married couple. If this is not possible, every endeavour should be made to introduce a man to represent a father where there is a housemother in charge and a woman to represent a mother in a boys' home staffed mainly by men.

The foundation of a child's security

18. A child cannot be happy unless he feels secure. Security is a frame of mind which has been created in the child by its past experiences. Indeed the young infant is entirely dependent on his mother (or substitute mother) for this feeling. Only as his needs are met, and these needs are not only physical, will he begin to build up within himself the sense of belonging which lays the foundations of mental maturity. The housemother cannot make the child feel secure, but she can provide the conditions in which he has the best chance of creating his own feeling of security.

Factors affecting security

19. *Affection.* The kind of love the child encounters is of supreme importance. The housemother should accept the child as he is, and no matter what he says or does should remain steadfastly prepared to succour and sustain him in times of difficulty. This does not mean that reprehensible behaviour is not criticised, but it means that the affection for the child is not diminished by it. The child should know that he has a sure, definite place in someone's affections, and then he will be able to accept criticism of his behaviour. The housemother should make her own association and personal relations with the children in her 'family' such that something approximating to this feeling can have a chance to grow.

20. *Stability.* A further necessity is that the environment should be stable, especially during infancy and the early years of childhood. The pattern of life found in a happy home where sensible parents not only give loving guidance but also set a good example provides children with the setting wherein they have the best chance of developing. This and a well ordered daily routine supply the secure environment which gives a child both confidence and purpose. Disruption of the accustomed and accepted pattern of life leads to confusion and personal insecurity and the emotional reactions which arise out of that state. This can be readily seen in children in a children's home where a shift system of staff is in operation and each member of staff on duty is demanding a different standard of behaviour. It is evident too in the behaviour of the child who has been in several homes or foster homes. Security is impossible if the children are subjected to a changing panorama of faces and places.

21. When a child feels accepted into the family and shares the intimacies of a small group and the community of interests that are fostered in such a setting then the environmental conditions in the home are providing the stability. The simple fact of sitting at the dining table with the same "brothers" and "sisters" and the same housemother stimulates a family atmosphere.

22. *Discipline.* Children as a rule accept the standards of their own home and adjust readily to them. Through the activities and the conditioning of daily family life, with the interplay of family relationships, character develops and they learn to control their own behaviour and become loyal members of the family group. The disciplinary plan in good homes allows the child to create for himself a measure of self-discipline. This is an essential factor in normal development, and without it a real and enduring state of security cannot exist.

23. Where there are too many children and too few staff for each child to be given individual attention, there is no other means of maintaining discipline but by strict rules which have to be made and applied without reference to individual needs. Where a child remains subject too long to that kind of discipline, his normal development to maturity is bound to be hindered.

*How to group the children**

24. The children in the bigger homes should be split up into groups of varying ages and both sexes, each in charge of a housemother and preferably also of a housefather. This arrangement permits brothers and sisters to remain together and so give each other comfort and support.

25. The family group must be kept small. Six is recommended as the ideal, and the maximum should be 12. Informal and individual discipline based on personal relations instead of impersonal rules is possible only in these circumstances. The younger the group the smaller should be the number.

Accommodation

26. Each housemother and her family should be given as much privacy as the accommodation can offer so that her influence is strengthened. A minimum requirement for each family would be a room for sitting and playing in. If possible a bathroom and lavatory should be allocated to each family also. Many homes do not lend themselves architecturally to such arrangements and a wholesale reorganisation into completely separate family groups may be impossible, but the important factor is the creation of the right relationship between the particular housemother and her children. In this connection the domestic staff should not be forgotten, and, if possible, each should be assigned to a particular family.

The children

27. Because of the personal relationships which are necessary, the matching of the child and the housemother should be carefully made. Once admitted to the group, the expectation would be that the child should grow up as the housemother's personal charge and should come to feel some of the same reliance on her concern and affection

* See also Chapter VIII

that the more fortunate child has towards his own mother. This does not mean that he could not be adopted or boarded-out, but he should feel that he can look forward to a period of permanency in the group.

28. A warm personal relationship, with tolerance of difficult behaviour, cannot be provided to order, however. Moreover one housemother will find one sort of difficulty easier to handle than another. If the relationship between a child and his housemother is strained it should not be allowed to persist, but the superintendent or matron should only move a child from the group after all else has failed.

29. Each family will be different, as it will develop its own way of living according to the personality of the housemother. The older children can be given a share of the responsibility and so help to create their own living conditions, and with the individual treatment which the small group makes possible the kind of domestic duties a child has to undertake can be easily controlled.

The housemother

30. The housemother must not attempt to be over-possessive in her relationship with the children ; and, unless the circumstances of the case make it clearly impracticable or undesirable from the child's point of view, she should encourage the parents or other relatives to visit them, and even to have the children home for periods. When the child is in the care of a local authority the children's officer should be consulted about this. Where there are no relatives the help of a foster aunt and uncle should be considered for that particular child. It may be that the housemother could find such " aunts " and " uncles " among her own friends. These contacts, if satisfactorily made, can provide a wider outlet for the child's emotions and thereby promote his social development. (See Chapter III).

31. A pair of housemothers should work together so that on days when one is off or on holiday the other can look after both families.

III. Foster Aunt and Uncle scheme

32. In every children's home there are children who have neither relatives nor friends, and the object of these schemes is to meet their needs by providing friends who will take an intimate and personal interest in them.

33. The relationship of "aunt" or "uncle" to a child in a home should not be entered into unless the person is likely to be able to continue his or her interest in the child for a lengthy period. This is very desirable, to ensure that the child may rely upon the "aunt" or "uncle" for advice and guidance throughout the time of adolescence and, if possible, after he has left the home.

34. To be effective the "aunt" or "uncle" must live within visiting distance of the home, as frequent visits by the child to the home of the "aunt" or "uncle" are essential. The greatest joy and happiness will come to the child from being allowed to share in everyday family life and being regarded as a member of the family group. The remembering of the child on his birthday and at Christmas will strengthen the bonds of mutual regard and affection, but expensive gifts and organised entertainments are to be deprecated. When the "aunt" or "uncle" goes on holiday the "adopted" child should not be forgotten: a post card or a letter will bring great pleasure to the child and an assurance that he has not been forgotten.

35. Where a home is isolated it may not be possible to operate a fully effective foster aunt and uncle scheme. In these circumstances "uncles" and "aunts" who are prepared to interest themselves in the welfare of individual children, by writing to them regularly and sending them occasional gifts, can do much to help. However, the children should be visited whenever possible.

36. "Aunts" and "uncles" should be made aware that many of the children in homes have been unaccustomed to normal family life and that this may make the initial stages of the relationship none too easy. Some children will be shy and unresponsive in the presence of strangers, and it may take quite a while to overcome the barriers of fear and distrust. In other children the craving for affection may be such that they will cling to those who befriend them to a degree which may be embarrassing. "Aunts" and "uncles" should be encouraged to treat the children normally, so that each child will come to regard the friendship given to him as part of his day-to-day life.

37. The following points should be made clear to enquirers who offer to undertake this valuable service:

- (a) The person should apply, where a home is run by a local authority, to the children's officer, or, where the home is under a voluntary organisation, to the secretary of that organisation or of the local committee of the home.
- (b) The child is the direct responsibility of the agency running the home in which he is resident. Any difficulties which arise

through the relationship of child to foster aunt or uncle, or any persistent complaints the child makes about the home, should be referred to the children's officer, in the case of a local authority home, and the secretary of the organisation in the case of a voluntary home. Such matters should not be discussed directly with the staff of the home.

- (c) The visits of the "aunt" or "uncle" to the home where the child resides are personal to that child, and the relationship in no way confers authority to inspect the home.
- (d) All arrangements for the child being absent from the home must be made in consultation with the person in charge of the home. On no account should plans be made for the child which would involve absence from school or from school activities. A child should return to the home at his normal bed-time. An invitation for the child to spend a week-end or short holiday with his "aunt" or "uncle" will usually be welcomed, but arrangements should be discussed with the person in charge of the home before any mention of them is made to the child, so as to avoid disappointment if the plans are impracticable.
- (e) If circumstances should make it impossible for the "aunt" or "uncle" to continue to befriend the child, the children's officer or the secretary of the voluntary organisation should be notified immediately so that another person may be found to take his or her place.

IV. Holidays

38. Families look forward to their annual summer holidays. Holidays should also be an important event in the lives of children who are being brought up in children's homes, particularly those children who live in a large community. For them a holiday may bring a complete change of surroundings, new friendships and perhaps an opportunity of sharing, if only for a short time, in the intimacies of normal family life.

39. The possibility of giving a child such an opportunity should always be borne in mind when the time comes to make plans for the summer. Some children may be able to stay with suitable relatives or friends or perhaps, in certain circumstances, with their parents; others may be able to spend their holidays with "uncles" and "aunts" who are willing to welcome them into their homes for a short spell during the summer months. Where this is impracticable, the children's officer should be consulted about the possibility of

placing children temporarily with foster parents who have already accepted children from his department. While everything should be done to promote such arrangements, it is obvious that care must be exercised in placing children in unfamiliar surroundings. The situation of a holiday foster home should be carefully considered and an effort made to ensure, not only that a home is suitable for a particular child, but that the child settles down happily with his new friends. It may be advisable to avoid a situation where a child is spending his holiday with complete strangers, as this may give rise to a certain amount of strain. If possible arrangements should be made for two or more children to be placed in the same home. The summer holidays may also offer an excellent opportunity for reuniting brothers and sisters who might otherwise see each other infrequently, and only on the occasion of brief visits.

40. Many children in homes are unfortunately "difficult". The behaviour of such children may appear to make "boarding-out" quite impracticable so far as their holidays are concerned. It may, however, be possible, perhaps on payment of a special rate of allowance, to have a difficult boy or girl accepted in a home where the foster parents are prepared to take the extra trouble involved in providing a holiday for someone who stands in the greatest need of understanding and affection and who might otherwise be denied the chance of sharing in the life of a normal family.

41. In the planning of summer holidays for children in children's homes there is ample room for variety, and an effort should be made to ensure that each child has the holiday best suited to his needs. Many of the older children will be attached to youth organisations of one kind or another and they should be encouraged to go with their friends to the annual camps. Many children in the care of a local authority or voluntary organisation have spent their happiest days with Boy Scouts, Girl Guides, the Boys' Brigade or some similar organisation. Such holidays have the great advantage that the children are encouraged to learn self-reliance while enjoying the company of boys and girls who come from ordinary homes. Older children may be helped in other ways to develop self-reliance; whenever possible, they should be allowed to travel unaccompanied when they go on holiday.

42. Arrangements may be made in some homes for staff and children to go on holiday together. In such cases the home may be closed for a few weeks while a school or a nursery school is taken over at the seaside. There the staff will undertake, with the help of the older children, all the cooking and cleaning. The National Camps have the

advantage that, being "all found," they enable the staff to devote their time to planning the children's leisure, but at present they are all situated in the country. Most children prefer holidays by the sea ; sea bathing has a greater attraction than fresh water bathing, and for the children nothing can quite equal the magic of the sands. It may be practicable to make use of one of the large commercial camps by the sea, although such camps are expensive.

43. Holidays spent under canvas have special attraction for older children. The staffs of individual children's homes and local authorities have organised highly successful summer camps in the past, but the success of this type of holiday necessarily depends to a large extent on the weather and on the care taken to organise the children's activities. Unless conditions are specially good the younger children may not stand up very well to the rigorous life, and camps are more suited to children who are older and more robust.

44. There are a number of convalescent homes which can be used for children who suffer from some physical or mental handicap or who, for the time being, have some physical disability. Although these homes are often full during the period of the school holidays, they can usually provide suitable accommodation at other times.

45. In the planning of summer holidays no child should be left out of account. It is particularly important that no child should be left behind in a home which has been evacuated for the holiday period by the majority of the staff and children. If no alternative holiday arrangements can be made for a child, for example, because of behaviour difficulties, it may be practicable to give him a change by placing him temporarily in another home. If only the older children are away on holiday the younger children who remain should have their share of open-air activities. They will derive great pleasure from occasional outings and picnics or visits to local places of interest.

46. The organisation of annual holidays inevitably entails a considerable amount of work for staffs, but the extra effort involved finds its own reward in the improved health of the children and in their enthusiastic response to the efforts made on their behalf. If a voluntary organisation has difficulty in making holiday arrangements for the children in its care the children's officer might be approached for assistance.

V. The care of children under five years of age

Infants under two

47. The daily routine for infants and young children should approximate as closely as possible to normal home life. The child may be placed in a small home among children of varying ages in order to provide a family atmosphere where he may develop under the personal care of houseparents and the interest of other children. Alternatively the child may be placed in a residential nursery ; and where the nursery is a unit of a large children's home he may be able to associate with the older children resident in the home.

48. The young child obtains a sense of security from the presence of a familiar face and the sound of a known voice. The nursery routine should be organised so that the child will receive attention, as far as possible, from one member of the staff.

49. The child should establish a warm satisfying relationship with this adult in order that he may receive the mothering care which is essential to his development. In order to ensure this, the baby should be fed on its housemother's lap. Infants vary in their feeding requirements and medical advice should be obtained regarding the feeding of individual infants. The care of infants demands much time, and it is essential that adequate staff should be provided in order to meet the needs of individual children.

50. The infant's needs all through this period are based on the same principles—the need of a mother, a home, the right type of activity and the right routine of a daily life. The emphasis must gradually change from doing things for the helpless infant towards allowing him to get the satisfaction of acquiring the skills of everyday life by doing things for himself and for others.

Children aged two to five years

51. For this age-group nursery schools have been set up in many parts of the country and full advantage should be taken of the available facilities. Where there is no nursery school readily accessible, activities should be introduced and supervised by someone who has experience in nursery work.

52. The child is helped to grow up by means of play : to him this is a serious business on which he spends much time, thought and energy; and in play he finds relief from tension. The child living under abnor-

mal circumstances needs fuller and better opportunities for play, as his conflicts may be more intense and his development less mature. The child in care is often backward, apathetic and unable to do much for himself ; his sense of belonging has had a severe shock, and the insecurity he feels must be recognised. To mitigate it the house-mother must be ready at all times to encourage his play activities. Play material should include personal as well as shared possessions. Playthings which have to be shared by the whole group, such as the chute or a tricycle, are useful, but in addition a variety of toys and other play material should be supplied. Young children require a long time to develop the idea of communal interest ; and each should have toys of his own and a place to store them.

53. The housemother should try to provide the child with as many experiences as a natural mother would do. It is important that children in this age group who are resident in a nursery or children's home should be taken out as often as is practicable, in small groups, to see as much as possible of normal living.

VI. Home and school relations

54. In "Primary Education"* a chapter is devoted to the subject of Home and School relations. It opens :

"While the home and school have the same general training purpose, they have distinct special functions. In addition to providing security, the home gives the child his first experience of the clash of wills and interests, and so of the need for self-discipline and the spirit of compromise. The school is a wider field for the exercise of these virtues, standing mid-way between the complete shelter of the home and the independent life of the outer world ; at the beginning it looks back towards the home, and near the end looks forward to vocational and social activities.

The smooth working of home and school relations during this long process of development makes certain demands on both parent and teacher. The relation must be one of mutual respect ; each must recognise the rights and duties of the other. But this respect should be solidly founded on knowledge. The teacher should know something of the home conditions of her pupils ; and the parent should know something of the purpose and practice of the school."

* Primary Education—A Report of the Advisory Council on Education in Scotland (1946 Cmd. 6973).

55. These remarks apply generally, but the needs of children in care are such that co-operation between the housemother and the school has added importance : it should be both close and continuous. The child in care needs conditions which will create in his mind a sense of security. The child should be handled so sympathetically that he will know that he has a place in the esteem of the housemother and the teacher, and feel confident of retaining their interest even although his behaviour is causing them concern. Reassured in this way the child will eventually make some endeavour to work with both the teacher and the housemother.

56. For a variety of reasons children resident in homes are liable to fall behind in their school work. Failure to keep up with his fellows may seriously affect a child's happiness and lead to behaviour difficulties. The housemother, therefore, as well as the teacher, should take an interest in the child's progress in school, studying school reports, discussing results with the teacher and helping the child by creating suitable conditions in which he can do his homework.

57. The housemother should make a point of visiting the school from time to time and not just when there is a need to discuss with the teacher some special problem of an individual child. Some housemothers keep in touch by calling at the school to change library books, while others join parent/teacher organisations. In such associations experienced housemothers have their own valuable contribution to make in the discussion of child welfare. The housemother should not miss any opportunity of being present on parents' days, at school concerts or exhibitions of work. She should not fail to take advantage of the invitation given to parents to accompany their children when they attend for medical examination. The housemother should also invite the teacher to call at the home, and should endeavour to give the visitor some understanding of the nature of the work undertaken by a housemother.

58. Being deprived of a normal family life, children in homes miss many valuable experiences in life enjoyed by children more fortunately placed, and the housemother should keep in mind the need to make up for these whenever opportunity occurs. He should be urged to take advantage of school journeys and visits to places of interest, and to take an active part in school games. Children from homes need to be helped out of the not unnatural habit of banding together at school ; they should be encouraged to make friends with other children in their locality, and to join a youth organisation, especially one outside the home.

59. As the child approaches the school leaving age it becomes increasingly important for the housemother to maintain the closest contact with the school, in order that there may be frequent consultation about the child's progress once the form of employment or further training for which he appears to be fitted has been decided. The co-operation of housemother, teacher, children's officer and youth employment officer is as important at this stage as in the initial procedure of assessment (see Chapter I). The problem confronting the children's officer when a child reaches the school leaving age has many features in common with the problem which he faced when that child was first received into care: a satisfactory solution can be found for both problems only if there is consultation among all those who have some knowledge of the child's potentialities, and general agreement about the way in which these potentialities may best be realised.

60. The cultivation of co-operation between home and school will go a long way towards saving the child in care from a sense of isolation, will lead him into a circle of friends and will help him to build up confidence with which to face the future.

VII. The care of older children *

61. Special measures must be taken to safeguard the welfare of those children who continue to be in care after compulsory school age until they reach the age of 18.

Committed children

62. Committed children, in particular, are anxious to return home and serious consideration should be given to having the Order revoked as soon as possible after the trial period at home has proved even moderately successful. Most of these children will return home immediately they are out of care and it seems advisable to allow the children to go home much earlier, as an attempt should be made to improve the whole atmosphere and condition of the home while the Order is in force. Where the difficulty is material some help should be sought.

63. Children who cannot go home and must leave the children's home for employment should be guided to lodgings as soon as

* Note: This chapter is extracted from the Memorandum circulated with Scottish Home Department Circulars Nos. 9074/5, dated 31st May, 1957.

practicable. Many landladies are genuinely interested in young people and look after them like good foster parents.

Education

64. As so many of the children are educationally retarded they should be allowed to continue at school for another year if it is considered to be to their advantage to do so. For the girls especially there are obvious advantages to be gained. The percentage of children in care having the benefit of higher education is still unduly low. Attendance at continuation classes, pre-apprenticeship schools or day release classes should be encouraged.

Employment

65. The first job often breaks down but, so long as admission into an apprenticeship is not in danger because of late entry, a change of job need not necessarily be regarded as a sign of instability. If the boy or girl, however, is undergoing special training or has started an apprenticeship he or she requires to be sustained firmly over the periods of indecision. Often the higher wages offered in the "dead-end jobs" are an attraction, but this should be resisted. Indeed, some convincing persuasion may have to be applied to make the young people complete the course. In this connection more advantage might be taken of section 20 of the Children Act which empowers a local authority to assist financially a child in care to complete a course of training.

Health

66. The health of this age-group requires even closer supervision because of physiological and psychological changes taking place and routine medical and dental examinations should not be discontinued. In addition, an annual visit to a mass-radiography unit is at present advisable.

67. Mentally handicapped children of school-leaving age require special consideration. They may have to be certified as mentally defective if they are unable to fend for themselves and there is no one to look after them. The local health authority will then take over their supervision and arrange for their training. The importance of continuous supervision and protection cannot be over-emphasised.

Training and special privileges

68. A child of school leaving age must not be retained in residence in a home for the purpose of employment within the home except with the consent of the Secretary of State. In cases where such consent has been given, the children should be offered a definite scheme of training. The instruction should be such that the young people become skilled workers fit for a responsible job on leaving the home. Wages (which may require to be supplemented by the responsible local authority) should be paid, out of which payment should be made to the home for board and lodgings. The balance should allow for pocket money and savings. Encouragement should be given to the child to buy some articles of clothing and to contribute to the cost of holidays. "No money sense" is a criticism often levelled at the children; but they cannot develop this sense if they do not handle money. Their full participation in the National Health Insurance Scheme should be safeguarded.

69. They should have set hours for work with definite free time off when they should be encouraged to go outside the home to form social contacts.

70. Within the home they should not continue to be treated just like the other children but should have a definite status.

71. Some privacy in the home is desirable for the older children, particularly the girls. A separate part of the building, or indeed a separate cottage helps to increase that awareness of growing up. Their sitting-room should offer some degree of comfort. They should be active members of outside youth organisations and members of a Church. Employment and lodgings for the children should be found, if possible, near the home. Many children can adapt themselves to only one new experience at a time, and they might be allowed to stay on at the home for a few months after they have started work.

VIII. Medical arrangements : prevention of infections : personal hygiene

Medical advice

72. The local authority can with advantage seek the advice of their Medical Officer of Health on all matters affecting homes they provide, including the appointment of the medical officer of the home; matters concerned with the health of the children and staff; precautions against the spread of infectious disease; and, where ap-

propriate, the medical aspects of planning the accommodation. Voluntary organisations may also find it an advantage to seek the advice of the appropriate Medical Officer of Health on such matters. It is desirable for the local Medical Officer of Health to be informed of the outbreak of any non-notifiable disease in any children's home.

The following suggestions may be helpful :

Isolation

73. A children's home should have suitably isolated sickroom accommodation, with its own sanitary unit. Infectious conditions should not be nursed in the home unless there is suitable isolation accommodation and sufficient staff, which is seldom the case in smaller homes. There should be an understanding between the medical officer of the home and the responsible authority for the removal at the earliest possible moment of children who contract an infectious disease.

74. The real purpose of the sick room in a home is for—

- (a) the immediate isolation of a child showing signs of illness until a diagnosis is made, or for a short time until the condition, if a minor one, clears up ; and
- (b) when necessary, for the short-term isolation of new admissions who are suffering from minor ailments or who have been in contact with infectious conditions.

Children who are known to be in quarantine for an infectious disease should not be admitted into a children's home unless it is possible to keep them entirely segregated, especially from the younger children.

Medical considerations in the grouping of children

75. In large mixed homes the children of school age, who are much more exposed to infections through attending school and through their other outside contacts, should live separately from the pre-school children. In mixed homes where there are six or more infants in arms, special arrangements for a separate group of infants are advisable owing to their susceptibility to infections and the serious effects which these may have on them.

76. Special arrangements to enable members of a family of different ages to maintain contacts may have to be suspended temporarily in the event of an outbreak of infectious disease. Dividing the children into small, more or less self-contained, groups helps to limit the spread of infections.

Personal belongings

77. For preventing the spread of infectious and contagious conditions each child in each group should have his own or her own personal toilet and other belongings, with his or her own place to keep these things. This also forms the basis of an essentially practical training in hygienic habits, which should start at an early age. Storage arrangements for personal possessions, especially toilet equipment should be so arranged that children become familiar with their own place and so can learn both to fetch and replace their own belongings for themselves : this gives young children great satisfaction.

Sanitary equipment

78. The placing and equipment of the sanitary units in a children's home needs careful consideration.

79. Recommendations regarding the numbers and sizes of W.C.s., wash hand basins and baths for children of various ages are to be found in the Appendix to the Report of the Homes Committee of the Scottish Advisory Council on Child Care. The arrangements in each case should be such as to facilitate training in clean habits.

80. Every W.C. compartment in the home should have a wash hand basin, with hot water, soap and towels. Notices can be obtained from the Scottish Council for Health Education reminding people of the need to wash their hands after using the W.C., and one of these notices might be placed in each compartment. In a slunge room there should be a wash hand basin for the use of the staff after attending to the needs of each infant and after dealing with soiled napkins or chamber pots.

81. The arrangements for keeping the children's towels, face cloths, tooth brushes, etc., which are in daily use must be such as to allow of free circulation of air round each article. Towels should be hung at least nine inches apart so as not to be in contact with another towel, the wall, or the floor.

Staff responsibilities for hygiene

82. The matron should devise a hygienic routine for each group of children.

83. Every member of the staff should be urged to co-operate in preventing the introduction and spread of infectious and contagious

conditions. Each new member before taking up duty should have this matter brought to her attention : she should be reminded of the need for a high standard in personal hygiene, and of the importance of setting a good example to the children in this regard.

84. The staff should help the children to acquire healthy habits, which lay the foundations for good health. The very early stage of doing everything for the child should give place in due course to the stage of encouraging the toddler through a wisely planned, and as far as possible enjoyable, routine to do things for himself in the correct manner. As the child's understanding grows, his intelligent co-operation should be sought : the staff who supervise his activities will have many opportunities for giving health education.

85. Suitable cloakroom and sanitary facilities must be arranged for the daily domestic staff. They should be given special overalls to wear while on duty, which should be kept in the home. The following matters should be brought to the notice of domestic staff on engagement, and these should be fully explained to them :

- (a) the need for their co-operation in the hygiene of the home ;
- (b) the need to report immediately to the matron any contact with illness or infection or any sign of indisposition so that suitable arrangements can be made according to circumstances ;
- (c) the importance which attaches to the work of cleaning the children's quarters, the kitchen, etc., and the need for those who do this work to co-operate fully in any special measures devised for the safety of the children.

Visitors

86. As regards visiting some precautions are necessary in the interests of the children's health. The majority of visitors, if rightly approached, will appreciate the need to co-operate in such matters. Regular visitors should be asked to co-operate, for example, by handing over in the first place any food they bring for the children to a responsible member of the staff so that the child will get only what is suitable in quantity, quality and condition. The advisability of wrapping up food and washing fruit which they bring in can be tactfully explained to them.

87. Visits from outsiders will have to be suspended when infections are present, and the reason for excluding visitors should then be explained. Relatives and friends must be asked not to visit if there is illness or infection in their households, or if they themselves are suffering from colds.

IX. Safety precautions

FIRE PRECAUTIONS

88. All children's homes must have adequate fire precautions and means of escape, but the measures to be adopted will vary widely with the age and number of the children and the type of building ; the extensive precautions necessary in a large nursery, for example, will have no place in a family group home. The aim should be to provide for the safety of the children without adopting measures which are over-elaborate or which might tend to differentiate the home too much from neighbouring premises.

89. The firemaster should be invited by the local authority or voluntary organisation responsible for the home to advise on the suitability of the measures already adopted. He should be consulted also at the planning stage when premises are to be adapted to provide a home or when a new home is to be built, and on the type of fire appliances to be purchased. If, for any reason, the purpose of a room is changed it is important that the firemaster should be made aware of the change. He should be asked to advise on fire drills, and, if there is no standing arrangement with the manufacturers for maintenance, to arrange for the inspection of patent fire extinguishers and other apparatus which may deteriorate.

90. Although the necessary fire precautions will vary widely, some features are common to most homes. Notices giving clear, concise instructions on the action to be taken in the event of fire should be placed throughout the home, and persons in charge of homes should ensure that children and members of staff are familiar with these instructions. The provision of adequate alternative means of escape, a simple but efficient warning system, and a method of rapid communication with the fire brigade are essential. It is recommended that at least seven fire drills should be held each year, three of these when the children are in their bedrooms, one being held before they go to sleep, one shortly before their normal time of rising and one during the night. The need to hold fire drills more frequently in short stay homes than in long stay homes should be borne in mind. The alarm system and equipment should be tested frequently and records of these tests and of fire drill should be kept. Close co-operation with the fire prevention officer of the area is advised.

91. While fire precautions and means of escape must be adequate, care should be taken to see that as far as possible they do not interfere with the running of the home or mar the internal or external appear-

ance. This is particularly important with family group homes, which, for example, might be given an institutional appearance by an external steel fire escape ; where an external escape must be provided, it should be sited, if possible, at the side or rear of the house. Similarly, internal escape ladders should be sited so that they do not restrict unduly the use of the rooms or spoil the appearance of living-rooms. Escape hatches should be placed so as to interfere as little as possible with the normal life of the home.

92. Means of escape such as patent lowering lines, transportable ladders, chutes and similar equipment have various disadvantages and cannot usually be recommended with any degree of confidence for use in children's homes.

93. Fireguards should be securely placed in front of fireplaces, radiators and other heating appliances.

94. In all cases of fire the Fire Brigade should be called immediately. The booklet " Fire ! Fire ! " * gives valuable advice on the avoidance of the danger of fire.

* Fire ! Fire ! published by H.M.S.O. Price 6d.

OTHER SAFETY PRECAUTIONS

95. Girls should wear pyjamas instead of nightdresses, as there is less danger of pyjamas catching fire.

96. Medicines and disinfectants should be kept in locked cupboards to which the children cannot gain access.

97. Where windows, verandahs or staircases are potentially dangerous, or where there are main roads, ponds, rivers, etc., in the vicinity, the risks should be assessed and the necessary safety measures taken. If the home is at the seaside or the children are taken there on holiday, suitable precautions should be taken on the beach.

98. In nurseries, the space between bars of new cots should be not less than $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches and, in order to prevent a child being able to get either head or body through the space, not more than 3 inches with an upward tolerance of $\frac{1}{8}$ inch. Safety catches on cots should be examined frequently to ensure that they are effective. Pillows are not advised for children under one year of age owing to the risk of suffocation.

99. A young child who is being bathed should never be left unattended. At least one responsible member of staff should be present in the bathroom during the whole time occupied in the bathing of the

child. As a precaution against burns and scalding, suitable arrangements should be made to ensure that the hot water supply to baths used by young children will not exceed a pre-determined temperature. This can be secured by means of a thermostatically controlled mixing valve, or, where this is not practicable, bath taps should be of the type regulated by means of a removable hand key. Keys for taps or mixing valves should be kept in the personal possession of a responsible member of staff. Where the hot water supply to hand basins is not thermostatically controlled, spring taps should be fitted.

RECEPTION CENTRE

CHILD'S PERSONAL RECORD

Name..... Father's Name.....
Date of Birth..... Mother's Name.....
(Legitimate/Illegitimate) Religion.....
Address.....
Brothers/Sisters.....
Date of Admission..... Date of Discharge.....
Discharged to.....

Personal History

Condition of Child on Admission

(1) *Physical Health and Habits*

(Enuresis, sleeping, eating, cleanliness, etc. Problems to be met as shown by medical examination).

(2) *Personality and Mentality*

(a) Appearance, characteristics, interests, abilities and disabilities, likes and dislikes, behaviour problems, social relationships to other children and to adults.

(b) Mental test (date, examiner, tests used)

(c) Scholastic tests in reading, arithmetic and spelling (date, examiner, tests used).

Visits by Relatives and Friends and letters received.

RECEPTION CENTRE

REPORT ON SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

Name :

Date of Birth :

Date of Admission :

Date of Discharge :

General Conduct

Habits

Temperament

General attitude towards other children and adults

Response to discipline

Behaviour at night

Interests, aptitudes, etc.

Special observations

General health

Warden

Date.....

Further reading

MEMORANDUM ON THE BOARDING OUT OF CHILDREN

A booklet for children's committees and social workers ; expands the 1959 Regulations into a clear and helpful analysis of the purposes and problems of finding real homes for children who have lost their own ; with suggestions on selection of homes and foster parents. Price 2/- (by post 2/2d.)

FEEDING NURSERY CHILDREN

Written mainly to help those in charge of young children in nurseries, etc., to plan and prepare balanced, attractive and varied meals. But parents will find a lot of useful advice and suggestions in this booklet. Price 1/- (by post 1/2d.)

YOU AND YOUR CHILDREN

Many booklets have been published during the last few years on the feeding and physical care of children—particularly children under one year of age. There is much less advice available for parents when children reach the “interesting”—and sometimes “difficult”—ages.

The B.B.C. talks by a medical psychologist, Dr Doris Odium, reprinted here, give simple hints on the handling of normal children—their fears, fads and fancies—and the problems that arise in every family. Price 9d. (by post 11d.)

Obtainable from

HER MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE

13A CASTLE STREET, EDINBURGH 2

and at Government Bookshops at addresses overleaf